

A SHORT
A C C O U N T

89
Wesley

OF THE
D E A T H
OF
SAMUEL HITCHENS.

By JAMES HITCHENS, *Tinner.*



L O N D O N:

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the Rev. Mr. WESLEY'S Preaching-Houses, in Town
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A SHORT
ACCOUNT, &c.

Bisweal, near Redruth, Cornwall.

MY Son, *Samuel Hitchens*, was born on the 23d of *March*, 1725. He was brought up to read and write. But he had almost forgot that, and every thing which is good, until God sent his Ministers into these parts also, to call sinners to repentance. He was soon very deeply convinced of sin: particularly, in the beginning of *January*, 1744, while *Mr. Reeves* was praying in my house. In the middle of our prayer, he fell to the ground, and cried so hard, that it greatly surprised us all. We were met, to take our leave of *Mr. Reeves* and *John Daniel*, who were going to *Bristol*. *Mr. Reeves* raised him up, and strove to comfort him. But he still cried out, "He was a lost, undone sinner." In the morning they set out before it was day. *Samuel* would needs go with them. He had not rode six miles, before God spoke peace to his soul. He rode about ten miles further, and then returned home rejoicing.

2. But it was not long before his faith was tried. The Devil first strove to reason him out of
of

of it. But he could not prevail. Then he stirred up the world against him. They came in multitudes, threatening to kill us all, and broke down the door and all the windows of the house, where we used to meet. After we had repaired these, they came and tore down the house itself, swearing they would tear down the house also where he lived. And we were forced to stop up the chamber windows as well as we could, or we should have been stoned as we lay in our beds.

3. When this did not move him, they got a warrant, and came to press him for a soldier, much about the time that they had pressed the Rev. Mr. *Graves* at *St. Just*, and carried him on board a man of war. And several of our neighbours who were quiet, industrious men, they did press, by virtue of that warrant, and carried them away from their work, and wives and families. But God suffered them not to touch him, tho' he was daily in his shop, and going up and down about his business.

4. But he was not so well aware of another snare which was laid for him: For soon after, having some thoughts of marriage, he gave way by little and little, till he found his heart was quite drawn away from God. Hereby he was quickly plunged into utter darkness of soul, and fell under stronger convictions than at first. He often told his brother, "he was in hell." He wandered about in the fields by night, *seeking rest, but finding none*: and often threw himself on the earth, and beat his head against the ground. And once when his brother and several others were present, he cast himself on the ground, *roaring aloud for the disquietness of his heart*, and beat and cut himself in several places.

5. He was quite delivered in a moment, in *December* last, and the Lord was with him as at the first. But after this deliverance, he began more sensibly to feel his want of inward holiness. He had always walk'd very circumspectly, having a tender conscience, even in the smallest things, avoiding all light discourse, and finding constant power over anger, his bosom sin. But this did not make him shut his eyes against the light, which shewed him the corruptions of his heart. And this knowledge, in particular, he was willing to learn, even from the meanest instrument. Nor did it cost any one much trouble to teach him; for he was indeed a *man that feared always*: Being so jealous of his own heart and conduct, that half a sentence, sometimes a single word, or even a look, would shew him what was amiss. And reproof, instead of falling short, would frequently strike much deeper than was intended.

6. He was very zealous for the Lord, and had great opportunities of shewing it in his daily business. For abundance of tinnors came to his shop (he being a smith by trade) both at morning and mid-day, and in the evening, to have their tools repaired. These he continually exhorted and reprov'd, with great boldness and plainness of speech: And yet so meekly, that few of them went away angry, and the greater part were quite in love with him.

7. His common hours of sleep, were between eleven and five. He was very diligent in his labour. Yet he could not refrain from breaking it off now and then, to go up into a little room, which he had purposely built just over his shop, and pour out his soul before God. But he had soon made up the time he had thus employed,

employed, so that no necessary business was neglected.

8. He had frequent and sore conflicts with the enemy of souls, who was permitted to sift him with divers temptations. One of the most dreadful was, doubting the being of a God; but out of this also the Lord delivered him.

9. His love of souls cannot easily be described, especially those that were more immediately under his care. If any thing was amiss in his class or band, he often felt the weight, before he discovered the reason of it: and would lay it home to them with the greatest earnestness, till he had found out the accursed thing. But his love was by no means confined to these. He would lament over sinners of every kind, those especially who would not hear the call of God, with inexpressible grief and tenderness. The prophet *Jeremiah* was in this his particular favourite. He used to tell much concerning "The weeping prophet:" And was often saying to himself, *O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears! If ye will not hear, my soul shall weep for you in secret places.*

10. By this eager love of souls, he was even constrained at the time we had no preacher among us, himself to exhort, first our own, and then other societies, *to continue in the grace of God.* But he had many sharp trials concerning this, fearing he should run before he was sent: Till one day in *May* last, being in deep distress, he went up into his room, threw himself down before God, and ceased not to wrestle with him in prayer, till all his doubts fled away, and he was fully convinced what was the will of God concerning him.

11. He often complained, that the world

was a burden to him, and he wanted to be wholly sequestered from it. But God convinced him at length, this was not right. " I now, said he, see plainly, there is such a thing as going through any business, and taking all prudent care, yet so as it shall only pass through our hands, without either troubling or intangling our hearts "

12. For some time he was under another mistake. He was even to an extreme, negligent of his apparel, thinking it was below the character of a christian, to have any, the least concern about it. But afterwards he was clearly convinced, that in this also he had gone too far, and that a christian ought even by his outward neatness, to shew forth the purity of his mind.

13. The last great temptation into which he fell, was that of denying to the body even what was necessary for its support. Though he worked hard at his own business, and spent his strength very much, in all the intervals of his work, in going up and down and exhorting the societies, he could not be prevailed on to take any cordial, or any thing for the preserving his lungs. For a considerable time before he was sick, he wholly abstain'd from flesh. And even other victuals he took at his father's table, as if he was stealing it; and it seemed by his manner, as if he seldom or never eat so as to satisfy nature. The error of this was not shewed him, till a day or two before he was taken ill: When he was fully convinced, that seeing the body as well as the soul is committed to our charge we ought with prudence and moderation to use all proper means, for the preserving the one as well as the other.

14. This temptation, I believe, began and ended, while he walked in the broad light of
God's

God's countenance: which he enjoyed with little intermission for two or three months before his last sickness. Indeed it increased very much toward the period of his life: He saw the corruption that remained in his heart. But tho' they were not destroyed, yet they were fast bound, so that they could not hurt him. The only shadow of doubt which he had was this: Whether the peace he had was not too great, while sin remained? But this was but a few moments at a time. And "e'er he was aware (he said) his soul flew back and centered in God."

15. On *Wednesday, Aug. 13.* John Trembath, being ill of a malignant fever, and as it was believed both by himself and others, ready to depart, desired to take his leave of the family. Samuel stoop'd down to kiss him, and was immediately sensible he had caught the distemper. However he met the society in the evening, and was unusually vehement in prayer. *Thursday, the 14th,* he continued working at his trade, till about four in the afternoon. Being then obliged to leave off, he came in to his parents, and said, he was not well. He talked of sickness and death with as much ease as of going to sleep, and mostly with a smiling countenance. Towards evening he took his bed: As he lay down he said, "Once I laid on this bed, full of guilt and fears; but now they are all taken away. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for sending his messengers into these parts. Now is the harvest come. Now I shall reap the end of all my prayers."

16. About nine his mother and I came to him, and he said, "Mother, you are troubled about many things. I know you have a great cross now sickness is in the house, over and
above

above the care of this large family. Father, you must bear your part. There is a want in you both. You are religious singly : but you are not free in confessing your faults and temptations one to another. It would be a great help, if you would set apart a time for this, for the family in general once a week. God has made you an instrument of keeping his little flock together in this place. I believe you do it with all your heart. Let us do it chearfully, and he will greatly bless us all."

17. He passed the night without sleep ; but continually praising God, and exhorting all that came in his sight. To one who stood by him he said, " I opened my Bible to day, on the cxii *Psalms*. Take the prayer book and find it." She did so, and he took especial notice of the 6th, 7th, and 8th verses. "'Tis sweet, said he, to speak those words experimentally : *He shall never be moved. He will not be afraid of any evil tidings ; for his heart standeth fast, believing in the Lord. His heart is established, and will not shrink until he shall see his desire upon his enemies.*

18. In the morning, Friday 15. He was full of the spirit of grace, and of supplication : always expressing an unshaken confidence in God, and making strong intercession for the church. " O, said he, could I but see the church of Christ, in peace and unity ! Of one heart, and of one mind ! Then I should die rejoicing indeed !"

19. Three of the leaders of classes coming in, he said, " We have been neglectful in one thing, in not going more diligently after backsliders, and bringing back the sheep that were lost. O it is a great thing, to bring one soul unto the Lord !

Lord ! Let me desire you to remember it for the time to come." One of them asked, " Shall I pray for you ?" he said, " Yes : but do not pray for my recovery." After praying, he asked, " How do you find yourself now ?" he said, " Clear of doubt : full of God."

20. The man coming to him who used to work with him in the shop, he said, " *John*, how is the case between God and your soul ? of late you have not been so earnest as you was. Why do you not join the society ? I believe you are kept from outward sin. But that will not do." A few days after the man came to me, desiring to be admitted into the society, and saying, " He hoped the words would never go out of his mind, and that he should never rest till he knew the Lord."

21. Speaking of some who were intangled with inordinate affection, and talked of their " wanting to know the will of God," he said, " When we can give up our own wills, then we shall know the will of God. And when that is known and carefully followed, all temptations of this kind are at an end."

22. He ask'd * one who was much with him, " Are you willing to die ?" and on her saying, " If I knew it was the will of God, I could lie down and not leave a wish behind:" he answered, " I think I am drawn two ways. I have a strong desire to *depart and to be with Christ* ; but sometimes I am drawn a little backward, not knowing whether my *abiding a while in the flesh*, may not be for the glory of God. These are two opposite points. When they are brought to meet, my way will lie strait before me."

* The same person who wrote part of this Relation.

23. The

23. He often made her repeat those lines of
Dr. Watts;

“ Say, live for ever, glorious King,
Born to redeem and strong to save !”

And catch'd the two next from her, repeating
with triumph,

“ Then ask the Monster Where's his sting?
And where's thy victory, boasting grave?”

24. Those three verses in one of the Funeral
Hymns he was almost continually repeating,

“ Thou know'st, in the spirit of prayer,
We groan thy appearing to see
Resign'd to the burden we bear
But longing to triumph with thee.
'Tis good, at thy word to be here,
'Tis better in thee to be gone,
And see thee in glory appear,
And rise to a share of thy throne.

“ To mourn for thy coming is sweet,
To weep at thy longer delay :
But thou whom we hasten to meet
Shalt chase all our sorrows away.
The tears shall be wip'd from our eyes,
When thee we behold in the cloud,
And echo the joys of the skies,
And shout to the trumpet of God.

“ Come then to thy languishing bride,
Who went'st to prepare us a place,
Receive us with thee to abide,
And rest in thy mercy's embrace.

Our

Our heaven of heavens be this,
 Thy fulness of mercy to prove,
 Implung'd in the glorious abyfs,
 And loft in the ocean of love."

25. *Elizabeth Thomas* being with him on *Friday* night, he asked her to pray, and said, "I can pour out my whole heart, and soul, and spirit, and life in prayer." She asked, "Can you rejoice in God?" he replied, "Yes; I have not the least doubt of my salvation. *I know that my Redeemer liveth*, and that I shall stand before him in that day. I know my Saviour is now at the right hand of God, and that he is praying for me. I see the gates of heaven stand open, and Jesus stands with open arms to receive me." Then he cried, "Let me go! I must be gone!" she asked him, "Whither he wou'd go? he said, "To my God;" and burst out, "Come, Lord Jesus! The harvest is ready. Come, Lord, and put in the sickle!"

26. The next morning, *Saturday* 16. his sweats stopped. All proper means were used to recover them. He said, "I believe, they will not return. But I have left all to God. My heart is full of God. I know he will *appear the second time, without sin unto salvation.*"

After lying a short time, he broke out into vehement prayer, first for the church, and then for himself: crying out aloud, "Open the heavens, O my God, and come down into my soul! come Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and plunge me into God! Carry me, ye angels to the bosom of my God. Bear me to the feet of Jesus!" then with smiles of triumph, not to be express, he cried, "Jesus is coming! Now I shall see
 the

the unclouded face of Jesus! 'Tis finish'd! 'Tis
finished! Jesus is come! Jesus is come!"

" For us is prepar'd
The angelical guard,
The convoy attends
A ministring host of invisible friends!

" Ready-wing'd for their flight
To the regions of light
The horses are come,
The chariots of *Israel* to carry me home!"

One called aloud to his mother to come. He
said, " You may call; but God will not stop
one moment." He spake no more, till he re-
signed his spirit into the hands of God.

F I N I S.

